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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [BK](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA: PARLIAMENT CONFIRMS EXTENDED IRAQ DEPLOYMENT

REF: A) SARAJEVO 310 B) STATE 11249 C) SARAJEVO 467

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DOUGLAS MCELHANEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Bosnian Parliament voted March 30 to confirm the Presidency's decision to extend the mandate of the Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) unit in Iraq through the end of 2007. The move clears the final legal hurdle to the deployment of a fifth EOD rotation in May. Securing the extended deployment is a significant success in advancing our bilateral security agenda. Political and military leaders continue to cite the political opposition to and the lack of resources for further deployments this year, and suggest Bosnia focus its current efforts on developing niche capable units ready for deployment in 2008. In light of pressing needs in Iraq, we will advise when the time and climate is better to request further deployments. End summary.

¶2. (C) On March 30, both the Bosnian House of Representatives and Peoples confirmed the Presidency's decision to extend the mandate of the Bosnian EOD unit in Iraq through the end of ¶2007. The actions of both houses fulfill the requirement for parliamentary confirmation of the extension, as required by the Presidency (reftel A). The next rotation of the EOD unit can now depart for Iraq in mid- April, as planned.

¶3. (C) Bosnian political and military leaders continue to tell us that it was a wise decision to request an extension of the current EOD mission only (see reftel C). There exists a near unanimity that a push to expand the Iraq mission or deploy forces to Afghanistan would have generated a substantial political backlash that could have jeopardized even the current deployment. Bosnian political leaders, the majority of whom are broadly supportive of peace support operations, have requested that further deployments be addressed at a later date. For their part, the civilian and uniformed defense leadership continues to cite the resource and personnel strains that the Ministry of Defense will face throughout 2007 as a reason to hold off on further deployments. (Comment. In our assessment, these resource and logistical concerns are legitimate. A good portion of 2007 will be spent filling out the new force structure of the

Armed Forces, and it would be difficult to pull individual units out of this plan for specialized training and deployment. End comment.)

¶4. (C) During the USG-sponsored NATO tour to Budapest, senior officials of the Hungarian Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs asked members of Bosnia's NATO-PfP Inter-Agency Working Group whether Bosnia could deploy in support of the Hungarian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan. The Hungarian officials, noting that other countries in the region, would deploy on the PRT, told the Bosnians that they could offer as little as two policemen to "put their flag" on the mission. The Bosnian group, consisting of Assistant Ministers and other officials of a similar level, pledged to relay the suggestion to the political leadership. In a follow-up conversation, the Assistant Minister of Security asked us whether the USG could provide specialized training for the police officers. (Note: Bosnia has already deployed approximately 20 police officers to UN-sponsored missions in Haiti, East Timor, and Cyprus. End note.)

¶5. (C) Comment. Securing early approval of the extended EOD deployment is a big win for USG security interests in Bosnia. Keeping the Bosnian government focused on their international security responsibilities, along with supporting the development of NATO niche capabilities, remains one of our highest policy priorities in Bosnia. Our early and sustained lobbying with the Presidency, parliamentarians and the Ministry of Defense ultimately proved effective in continuing the mission. We, along with our international partners, have made clear that Bosnian participation in peace support operations remains important to the goals of their PfP membership and of broader

Euro-Atlantic integration.

¶6. (C) Comment cont'd. As we have noted before, the past year's shift in Bosniak politics makes requests for further deployments at this time difficult. Bosniak Presidency Member Haris Silajdzic is primarily responsible for this development, and has made clear in public statements and private discussions that he would oppose further or augmented deployments. Silajdzic's potential to make political hay over the deployment issue is real, and fits with his broader, confrontational approach in dealing with us. Recognizing the importance of expanding Bosnia's overseas commitments, both in terms of our larger policy objectives here and as a means to decrease the burden on our own forces, we will continue to closely monitor the situation and advise Washington when to consider a mission expansion or alteration. End comment.
MCELHANEY